

# ResearchNexus

A newsletter by the UFS Directorate Research Development



## Message from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation, Prof Vasu Reddy

As we approach the end of an eventful 2024, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the UFS community for your unstinting dedication, drive and creativity in working tirelessly to promote and set an example with your research efforts. Despite challenges in both the higher education sector and otherwise, we at the UFS continue to raise the bar with our collective efforts.

Photo: Sonia Small



Prof Vasu Reddy.

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## News

### DRD team engages with global experts at 2024 SARIMA conference in Mozambique

Photos: Supplied



The UFS DRD team that attended and presented at the 2024 SARIMA conference in Maputo, Mozambique.

By Leonie Bolleurs

The Directorate Research Development (DRD) team from the University of the Free State (UFS) joined research management professionals from across the globe at the 2024 Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) Conference held in September this year. This year's conference, hosted for the first time in Mozambique, focused on the theme, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child", highlighting the collective effort needed in research and innovation.

The UFS delegation participated in workshops on navigating change, unlocking research impact potential, tools and techniques for research and innovation project management, reviewing research-related contracts, and assessing associated risks. The Gates Foundation also led a training session, while other workshops explored strengthening global research partnerships and advancing competencies in research management.

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## UFS joins SARIMA initiative to boost global visibility and research excellence

Photo: Stephen Collett



*The university proudly participates in the SARIMA Visibility Project, aimed at enhancing its global visibility and research excellence.*

**By Leonie Bolleurs**

The UFS has been selected to participate in a high-impact initiative managed and coordinated by the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA). The SARIMA Visibility Project, which focuses on elevating institutional prominence, aims to enhance the university's global visibility and strengthen its capacity to secure international grants. By participating in this initiative, the UFS is positioning the Directorate for Research and Development (DRD) to benchmark against other leading Tier 1 institutions, adopting best practices in research management and innovation to fuel future growth.

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## Second International Postdoctoral Day celebrates postdoc fellows' contributions at the UFS

Photos: Supplied



*The postdoctoral fellows at this year's International Postdoctoral Day represented countries such as Zambia, India, Nigeria, China, Iran, Zimbabwe and Cameroon.*

The UFS Directorate Research Development (DRD) recently hosted the second International Postdoctoral Day, celebrating cultural diversity and academic excellence that postdoctoral fellows add to the institution.

Prof Vasu Reddy, UFS Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation, honoured the postdoctoral fellows for the value they are bringing to the UFS, as well as for their contribution. He said, "Today is about getting to know one another, eating, and to say thank you to everyone. We want to welcome to the UFS those of you who have joined us recently and those of you who joined us earlier; we hope you are enjoying your stay."

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*Maricel van Rooyen, UFS Research Ethics Adviser, led the first UFS webinar on Environmental and Biosafety Research Ethics, highlighting the importance of ethical compliance and interdisciplinary collaboration in research.*

# UFS hosts the first-ever webinar on Environment and Biosafety Research Ethics

By Leonie Bolleurs

The University of the Free State (UFS) held its first-ever national webinar on Environment and Biosafety Research Ethics, marking a milestone in establishing research compliance in this niche field, this term. The webinar, which formed part of the SARIMA Eastern Region Community of Practice (COP), hosted individuals representing a wide range of professionals, including Research Ethics Committee (REC) chairpersons, research compliance managers and directors.



According to Maricel van Rooyen, Project Manager for Research Information Management System (RIMS) and Research Ethics Adviser in the Directorate Research Development (DRD), the webinar highlighted the necessity for interdisciplinary collaboration among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and policymakers to tackle complex biosafety and environmental challenges effectively.

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## Processes

### Understanding DRD's central research funding application and payment process

Navigating the central research funding application and payment process is important for researchers seeking financial support for their projects. The following flow chart illustrates the steps involved, from the initial application submission through to fund allocation and management, ensuring a clear understanding of how to access and use research funding effectively.

[View flow chart](#)



CRF  
Process







Photo: Canva

*Each creative output submitted by the university is making a lasting impact on the academic and creative landscape.*

## Creative outputs for 2024, a showcase of innovation and excellence

**By Leonie Bolleurs**

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) established 30 September 2024 as the deadline for submitting creative outputs for the 2024 reporting year. Under the coordination of Boemo Segoje, the UFS creative outputs coordinator, 16 creative outputs were successfully uploaded to the DHET Research Outputs Submission System (ROSS).

Examples of creative outputs eligible for submission include designs, film and television productions, fine and visual arts, literary arts, music, performance and dance, and theatre. One such submission from UFS is a music composition produced by the Odeion School of Music, which was successfully uploaded to ROSS for the 2024 reporting year.



Photo: Stephen Collett

*Boemo Segoje.*

Each submission underwent a thorough quality assurance review by the Creative Outputs Institutional Internal Evaluations Committee. This process aligns with the DHET's 2017 policy on evaluating creative outputs produced by public higher education institutions, which ensures that submitted works meet the required standards for recognition.

The creative outputs now contribute to the university's record of innovative and impactful scholarly work, enhancing the university's visibility and reputation within the broader academic and creative communities.



Photo: Canva

## Get your CV updated on the NRF connect system

**By Leonie Bolleurs**

Updating your CV on the NRF Connect system is now a requirement for all UFS researchers from 2023 onwards. Here's a quick guide to get you started:

- **Register:** Go to the NRF Connect system and register using your ORCID ID or email and create a password if you haven't already done so.

*Starting in 2023, all UFS researchers are required to update their CVs on the NRF Connect system. Make sure yours is up to date!*

- **Sync your CV:** If you have previously used the NRF Online Submission System, you can easily sync your existing CV to the new NRF Connect system by selecting "Sync Now".
- **Update your CV:** After syncing, update your profile with the latest information, including publications, research outputs, and any recent achievements.
- **Save and submit:** Make sure to save your updates and submit them for verification.

For further assistance or to obtain NRF rating documents and guidelines, please reach out to Thabi Mosoetsa at [Mosoetsat@ufs.ac.za](mailto:Mosoetsat@ufs.ac.za) or Eleanor van der Westhuizen at [vdwesthd@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vdwesthd@ufs.ac.za)

Access the NRF Connect Profile Registration Guide [here](#).

**Read more**



*Dr Yolandi Schoeman is redefining the future of ecological restoration with innovative solutions for both Earth and space.*

## Dr Yolandi Schoeman: 'Humanity holds the pen that can rewrite our future'

**By Leonie Bolleurs**

Dr Yolandi Schoeman, a Senior Lecturer in Ecological Engineering in the Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry at the University of the Free State (UFS) and the Ecological Engineering Institute of Africa, was captivated by the synergy between engineering and the natural sciences from a young age. She said that the potential within ecological engineering to regenerate ecosystems at all scales, from the microscopic to vast landscapes, really drew her in. "This field offers solutions not only for daily sustainability challenges but also for the grave threats to planetary health and human well-being.

However, when I was starting out, ecological engineering wasn't recognised as a formal career path in South Africa, and studying it in the United States wasn't feasible for me at the time. So, I explored various educational paths in civil engineering and natural sciences, aiming to merge these disciplines in my projects and research. My ultimate goal has been to establish and develop the field of ecological engineering both in South Africa and across Africa," she

explained. Dr Schoeman's work in ecological engineering spans two main areas: conventional and extreme ecological engineering.

### **Conventional and extreme ecological engineering**

On the conventional side, she says she is focusing on projects like designing constructed wetlands to naturally treat water, implementing urban greening initiatives to cool cities and manage stormwater, and regenerating various habitats to bolster biodiversity. In terms of extreme ecological engineering, she focuses on developing innovative solutions for ecosystems that have been severely impacted by disasters like industrial accidents or natural calamities. Additionally, she is pioneering and leading efforts in astro-ecological engineering, applying these principles to rehabilitate severely damaged terrestrial environments while exploring their potential for extraterrestrial applications, advancing both sustainability and ecological restoration.

There are two moments in her journey that Dr Schoeman recalled helped shape her career. One was being invited to participate in the 2006 Brightest Young Minds initiative, hosted by the University of Stellenbosch. She said that it was the first platform where she could really develop and share her ideas and vision in ecological engineering. "I contributed to a publication titled Engineering Engineering, which focused on integrating nature into every facet of development and operations. That experience validated my vision of combining engineering and natural systems."

The other transformative experience came during her studies in Executive Leadership at the Skolkovo School of Management in Moscow. "I was tasked with leading a multidisciplinary, international team that had to create a sustainability strategy for a major international iron, steel and vanadium company. The project pushed me to defend sustainability solutions that would alter the way this industrial giant operated. It was a deeply challenging process that changed my perception of true sustainability and what it means to deliver solutions that are both impactful and make business sense. That moment forced me to step out of the comfort zone of conventional sustainability and reorient my path toward pursuing solutions that seemed almost impossible, but necessary."

### **Advancing ecological engineering across Africa**

Two of the most important research projects she has been involved in include advancing ecological engineering across Africa and restoring and managing ecosystems that are considered beyond conventional repair. The first project involved establishing an international institution that spearheads various innovative research areas, including exploring floating treatment wetlands, different types of constructed wetlands, and technologies for smarter ecosystem management in urban and rural contexts. "This comprehensive project has substantially elevated the global understanding and application of ecological engineering, addressing a spectrum of sustainability challenges," she said.

[Read more](#)

# Announcements

Photo: Canva



## Pencil in

Important RIMS dates:

*January - June 2024*

- Deadline for capturing of Research Outputs: 31 January 2025
- Central Research Fund (CRF) training: 27-31 January 2025
- Deadline for capturing Creative Outputs: 28 February 2025
- CRF training: 18 February 2025
- CRF training: 18 March 2025
- CRF training: 22 April 2025
- CRF training: 20 May 2025
- CRF training: 17 June 2025

Important Research Ethics dates:

General/Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC) committee	
Deadline	Meeting date
1 January 2025	30 January 2025
1 February 2025	27 February 2025
1 March 2025	27 March 2025
1 April 2025	24 April 2025
1 May 2025	29 May 2025
1 June 2025	26 June 2025
1 July 2025	31 July 2025
1 August 2025	28 August 2025
1 September 2025	25 September 2025
1 October 2025	30 October 2025
1 November 2025	25 November 2025

  

Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC) committee	
Deadline	Meeting date
11 February 2025	18 February 2025
1 March 2025	18 March 2025
1 April 2025	15 April 2025
1 May 2025	20 May 2025
1 June 2025	18 June 2025
1 July 2025	22 July 2025
1 August 2025	19 August 2025
1 September 2025	16 September 2025
1 October 2025	21 October 2025
1 November 2025	18 November 2025

  

Environment and Bio-Safety Research Ethics Committee (EBREC) committee	
Deadline	Meeting date
1 February 2025	12 February 2025
1 March 2025	12 March 2025
1 April 2025	16 April 2025
1 May 2025	14 May 2025
1 June 2025	11 June 2025
1 July 2025	16 July 2025
1 August 2025	13 August 2025
1 September 2025	10 September 2025
1 October 2025	15 October 2025
1 November 2025	12 November 2025



Photo: Stephen Collett



*Tebogo Machethe.*

## Tebogo Machethe: 'Intellectual property making a difference in the lives of ordinary people'

**By Leonie Bolleurs**

For Tebogo Machethe, entering the field of intellectual property was a serendipitous discovery. He first encountered intellectual property (IP) during an internship at the Patent Office in 2004. "I applied for an internship at the Patent Office," he remembers, "and that was my introduction to intellectual property. I had never even heard of it before." Despite the unexpected start, he quickly became interested in the field and has been driven by a passion for IP ever since.

From 1 June 2023, Machethe is serving as the Director of Innovation and Contracts at the Directorate of Research Development (DRD) at the UFS. His mission is clear: to bridge the gap between research and real-world applications by increasing the adoption of research outcomes in industry and transforming UFS research into commercial opportunities.

With a background in IP management and technology commercialisation, Tebogo is committed to building strong stakeholder relationships that amplify the university's research impact.

[Read more](#)

## Data systems



### Sponsored Programme Information Network (SPIN): the largest funding search engine

There are three search modes available to users. This includes the following:

- Basic (text) search
- Keyword search
- Advanced search

For any queries, please contact Amanda Smith on [smitham@ufs.ac.za](mailto:smitham@ufs.ac.za)

[Access SPIN here](#)



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